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# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE



*A Publication Concerned With  
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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## The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

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Michael Murphy

**Objectives of the Club:** To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse the information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

**Club Publications:** THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

**Field Trips, Lectures** and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

**Membership Fees:** Individual (yearly) \$33   Sustaining (yearly) \$50  
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Views expressed in Trail & Landscape are not necessarily those of the OFNC

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# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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# Welcome New Members

## Ottawa Area

Kim Borg	Mark Oudin
Janet M. Boufford	Lynn Ovenden
Lyse Brooks	Heather J. Pickard & family
Margaret M. Clarke	Steve A.T. Piluso
David W. Deyette & family	Allan Porter & family
Laura Doubleday & family	Kyla A. Redekop & family
Erwin & Gert Dreessen	Michelle A. Simoneau
Patricia Dunits	Anna Sipos & family
Susan Gardiner	W. Andrew / N.B. Stewart
François Gérin-Lajoie	Bruce Tate / Kim Meimaroglou
Carmela B. Graziani	Ginette J. Vanasse & family
Peter & Judy Hall	Janet M. Wall
Leonard R. Howley & family	Ron H. Wallace
Jocelyn R. Macgregor	Richard Ziegler
Paul J. Mirsky	

## Gatineau Area

Lucie Jamieson

## Other Areas (Ontario)

S. & P. Kevan  
Lynn J. Landriault  
Diann B. Lawton

Henry Steger  
Chair, Membership Committee  
February 2007

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# “Golden Anniversary”

## Membership List 1942 – 2007

*Henry Steger  
Membership Chair*

*Joined in*

1942	R. Yorke. Edwards	Victoria BC
1943	C. Stuart Houston	Saskatoon SK
1943	Mrs. Sheila Thomson	Ottawa ON
1946	J.M. Gillett	Ottawa ON
1947	W.J. Cody	Ottawa ON
1947	W.A. Fuller	Athabasca AB
1948	Mr. David Erskine	Ottawa ON
1948	Mrs. E. Frankton	Ottawa ON
1950	H.G. Lumsden	Aurora ON
1951	E. L. Bousfield	Ottawa ON
1954	Yvonne & James Blendell	Clayton ON
1956	Charles D. Bird	Erskine AB
1956	J.W. Holliday	Ottawa ON
1957	R.E. Bedford	Ottawa ON
1957	J.E. & Mary E. Bryant	Ottawa ON
1957	C.S. Churcher	Gabriola Island BC

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# The 128<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting

*K. McLachlan Hamilton*

This year's annual business meeting was not the "same as usual." First, the weather was completely different; it was neither severely cold nor incredibly snowy. Second the meeting was held in the newly renovated Discovery Zone Theatre at the Canadian Museum of Nature. Getting into the museum and then up to the fourth floor was an interesting adventure, but there were plenty of people to guide us. The meeting room, which seated about 65 people, was inviting and quite pleasant.

The meeting began with a brief introduction by Mike Murphy, President, where he showed us the plaque we received recognising the OFNC as being the oldest natural history club in Canada. We then continued with Frank Pope (Treasurer) presenting his report. He carefully reviewed all the tables and explained where the Club is financially. Essentially Club revenues are up this year due to donations from members (on behalf of the OFNC, thank you to all of you who helped this year) and from a bequest. Ways to reduce Club liabilities were also discussed. It was decided at this time that the auditor for the upcoming year will continue to be Janet Gehr.

Next on the agenda were the committee reports. For me, these reports are an excellent way to see what is going on outside my particular interests. For instance, I learned that at the end of the year there were 878 Club members and 36 excursions. I also learned that a Certificate of Merit from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects was given to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden for "Service to the Environment." Other highlights include: the Macoun Club continues to be active (there were 17 indoor meetings and 17 field trips), the Peregrine Falcon Watch is 10 years ago, and newly-designed t-shirts (made of 100% organic cotton and cost \$15) as well as other items are available for sale at all Club meetings and hopefully will be available through the Club website ([www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca)).

The formal portion of the meeting ended with the report from the Nominating Committee where Eleanor Zurbrigg presented the slate of Council members. There were no changes to the Executive and Committee Chairs and very few to Council. The Club welcomes Annie Belair to Council and thanks Susan Howell and Justin Peters for their participation. Therefore the 2007 Council will be as follows:

President  
Vice President

Mike Murphy  
Ken Allison

Secretary	Susan Laurie Bourque
Treasurer	Frank Pope
Past President	Gary McNulty
Business Manager	Bill Cody
Editor CFN	Francis Cook
Editor T&L	Karen McLachlan Hamilton

The committees, their chairs (with contact information), and members are listed on page 70. Minutes of the meeting and the financial statement will be published, in full, in an upcoming issue of the Canadian Field-Naturalist.

The main event was a presentation/demonstration of the OFNC website. Sandy Garland, the Club's webmaster, began with a brief history and then gave us a tour of the site. She showed us how to manoeuvre around the web site, the most active pages and described how a page's "popularity" is assessed. The latter was illustrated by giving us the data recorded for the month of November. In that month, the web site received almost 140,000 hits. The Fletcher Wildlife Garden received the most number of hits, followed by the Canadian Field-Naturalist and then the Birds Committee. One of my observations is Sandy's dedication to keeping the website current, accurate and ensuring that there are no broken links.

Sandy's talk was so informative that for those who were not able to make the meeting, I suggest you read her synopsis on page 72. I also suggest people take a personal tour of the website (*ofnc.ca*). If there are any comments, suggestions, or problems, Sandy would like to hear from you.

## OFNC Committees for 2007

*Frank Pope*

The following OFNC committee members were approved by the Council at its meeting on February 19. Committee members may be added during the year as approved by the Council. The members listed below will operate your club in 2007. Committee Chairs appear in bold letters with their telephone numbers and email addresses. Should you have any questions, comments, complaints or compliments pertaining to the operations of a committee, or if you want to serve on a committee, please contact the Chair or speak to a member of the relevant committee.

**AWARDS**  
**Irwin Brodo**  
**(613-723-2054**  
***ibrodo@sympatico.ca)***  
Christine Hanrahan  
Diane Lepage  
Eleanor Zurbrigg  
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Ken Allison  
Marie Bedard  
Colin Bowen  
Christine Hanrahan  
Bernie Ladouceur  
Christina Lewis  
Bev McBride  
Larry Neily  
Gordon Pringle  
Adam Smith  
Michael Tate  
Eve Ticknor  
**BIRD RECORDS**  
(subcommittee)  
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Ken Allsion  
Bernie Ladouceur  
Christina Lewis  
Daniel St-Hilaire  
Jeff Skevington  
Michael Tate  
Chris Traynor  
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**MANAGEMENT**  
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Sandy Garland  
Sandra Gushue  
Gordon Pringle

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David Hobden  
Frank Pope  
David Seburn  
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Colin Freebury  
Sandra Garland  
Jay Ladell  
Diane Lepage  
Christine Hanrahan  
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Catherine Hooper  
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Eleanor Zurbrigg  
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***ron.bedford@cyberus.ca)***  
Bill Cody  
Francis Cook  
Karen McLachlan Hamilton  
Luke Periard  
Elizabeth Morton  
Joyce Reddoch  
Susan Robertson

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# Conservation Matters

*David Hobden*

At its December meeting the committee reviewed the past year. We are a very small group of active members where one person tends to handle each issue. Meetings and email discussions do provide valuable support and exchange of ideas. Anyone interested in joining the committee is asked to contact Stan Rosenbaum at [srosen@magma.ca](mailto:srosen@magma.ca) or 613-596-4288.

## **Larose Forest**

Ongoing observation and the two bio-blitzes conducted in 2006 have established Larose Forest as one of the most significant natural areas in that region. The local government has hired consultants to prepare a Protection and Development Plan for the forest. The aim is to promote sustainable use of the forest. A public meeting to review the proposed plan was held on January 25. The Conservation Committee sent comments in a letter and Christine Hanrahan attended as a member of the Advisory Committee. About 150 other people attended, mostly local francophone residents. They were overwhelmingly in favour of preserving the forest, and against an increase in motorized recreation, which on the contrary they felt needs to be more closely regulated. Our concern that the meeting would see a large turnout by motorbike people was unfounded, probably because they had already received assurances that their concerns had been noted. Overall the expertise brought by OFNC is being welcomed for its contribution to making local decisions. The Conservation Committee hopes to arrange a committee field trip to Larose in the spring. For more information please check the web site at:

<http://www.ofnc.ca/conservation/larose/index.php>.

## **Turtle Habitat Threatened by Light Rail Transit (LRT) or Transitway Construction**

Previously proposed by LRT planners as a site for the maintenance yard, and still considered as the preferred LRT route or (alternatively) a route for Transitway extension, the greenspace between Lester Road and the Airport Parkway appears to be suitable habitat for the threatened Blanding's Turtle. The campaign being led by the Save Our Greenspace is of interest to the OFNC. However, letters being sent to federal Environment Minister Baird and to City politicians may be poorly timed, due to present lack of a definite transit plan. Mr. Baird's involvement could be invoked if a federal contribution towards an LRT system again appears on the table, but this has not yet happened. The solution being proposed by the Save Our Greenspace

group is to have the transit route run beside the Airport Parkway south of Hunt Club Road. This will leave the main wetland area undisturbed by new construction. Given the present uncertainty in Ottawa's transit planning anything may be possible, but the City's poor record of dealing with conservation issues coupled with the radical nature of the new proposal does not bode well for its success.

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## *T&L* Index: We Need your Vote

The deadline is looming and we still need your input.

The second *Trail and Landscape* 20-year index is well on its way, but still we are not sure in what form. Do we continue with our print format, or do we produce a CD? Do we make it available on our web site or not? What would you choose? Please let us know.

To register your vote, contact either the Club ([www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca) or 613-722-3050) or Joyce Reddoch at [reddoch@magma.ca](mailto:reddoch@magma.ca) or

548 Rivershore Crescent,  
Gloucester, ON, K1J 7Y7

If responding by email, please write "T&L index request" in the subject window of your email message.

In order for us to make an informed decision, we want all responses by **May 15, 2007**.

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# OFNC web site—[www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca)

*Sandy Garland*

The OFNC web site is 10 years old this year, so this seems like a good time to have a look at how it's doing, what it's doing, and whether it's living up to expectations.

## **History**

In 1996, the Education and Publicity Committee, the FWG and possibly other committees had independently started to work on web sites to publicize their activities. In January 1997, Frank Pope put an ad in *T&L* calling for people interested in working on a web site to attend a computer committee meeting. The response was good, tasks were delegated, a mock-up web site was prepared for Council, and by mid-1997 we had a site up and running. Achilles was our service provider (ISP).

The initial structure and content reflected the main activities of the Club and the people present at those early meetings—birding (Bev Scott), events (Sandra Gushue), FWG (me), and publications (to try to promote book sales). Alan German, who chaired the Computer Committee, wrote the content for our main index page. In 1998, Falcon Watch was added, mainly because Alan was a volunteer and saw the watch as a way to promote the OFNC. Several years later, we added an awards section, thanks to Christine Hanrahan, who dug through back issues of *T&L* to find the names of all previous winners and compiled a complete list for the web site. Rob Lee and some of the senior Macoun Club members contributed information about that group and it later spun off into their own web site. Around the same time, Stan Rosenbaum, Christine Hanrahan, and Frank Pope began to contribute reports and information about key areas of interest to the Conservation Committee (e.g., Alfred Bog, Petrie Island, and later Larose Forest).

Several years ago, Council decided that we should have our own domain name—*ofnc.ca*. This was fortunate, because within the next year Achilles went out of business and we had to find a new service provider very quickly. Because we had a domain name, there was a minimum of disruption in service. We are now with Primus (formerly Magma), which provides excellent service. In addition to the web pages that you see on the site, we have access to a database (MySQL), which we are currently using to provide information about wildflowers at the FWG.

## **Policies and rules**

As the web site expanded, it became necessary to establish some rules and guidelines. For example,

- material must be submitted by committee chairs or designated people on committees.
- links must be to reputable organizations—universities, government agencies, museums, reputable wildlife and conservation organizations. Occasionally, we link to a private web site, but not if it is a for-profit organization.
- no announcement from a commercial establishment should be posted.
- only email addresses approved by the address owner can appear on the site.
- telephone numbers are not posted.
- meeting places for excursions are not posted to encourage people to join the Club before participating.

## **Purpose**

Is our web site effective? Council's original intent in establishing a web site seems to have been simply that similar organizations had sites; therefore, we should have one too. But a web site should serve a purpose. It should improve communications within the organization, publicize the organization and its activities, or save money. Does the OFNC site do any of these things?

### **Uses by Club members**

While preparing a report to Council for the annual meeting, I asked some current contributors to the web site whether they find it useful and how.

#### **Christine Hanrahan (FWG, Awards, Conservation, OBBA)**

- Making a Breeding Bird Atlas section on the web site provided a central location for useful information for atlassers. The annual OBBA report for our region reached a wide audience and attracted new volunteers. Atlassers' photos helped create a sense of community among the volunteers.
- Conservation – post committee reports to let the wider community know about OFNC conservation activities.
- Posting information about Larose Forest has allowed a very wide audience to learn more and encouraged many people to visit, which in turn helps in conservation efforts. We have become a focal point for people wishing to learn more about Larose—people consult it regularly.

#### **Christina Lewis (bird reports, seedathon, bird study group)**

- Great way to advertise such events as the Fall and Christmas Bird Counts and Seedathon. It's easier to provide details and contact information than on

- the bird status line.
- Source of information on local birding for non-OFNC members—attracts new members.
- A great way to get the bird sighting summaries in print, so that people can look back and read them.
- I use it to check on the latest OFNC activity updates, e.g., species lists for Larose forest and other areas, and also as an easy way to find links to other birding and natural history web sites.

#### Gordon Pringle (bird reports and records)

- The web site is of immense value to the Club. The web is increasingly the way people relate and communicate with each other and with their organizations.
- The birding section of the site is a major introduction for people visiting Ottawa, or people new to Ottawa. Our weekly status line transcripts go directly to more than 4000 people every week.
- A considerable volume of inquiries come directly to Chris Lewis and me, many of these involve people seeking instructions for birding trips in Ottawa.

#### Colin Bowen (bird counts, where to go birding in the Ottawa area)

- We get a good response to the Christmas Bird Count and Fall Bird count data, e.g., from university students wanting to use the data.
- “Where to Bird in Ottawa” has generated a lot of email—some suggestions, others thanking OFNC for helpful information.

#### Henry Steger (membership)

- Close to 50% of new members come via the application form on the web site.

#### The Canadian Field-Naturalist

- Librarians like the annual indices.
- Abstracts now on line in PDF format, and they are generating quite a bit of interest (based on monthly page hits).
- Easier to email book reviews to publishers.

#### Fletcher Wildlife Garden

- The web site allows us to publicize our plant sale, our open house for International Migratory Bird Day, and the garden in general.
- Good way to get new volunteers (we can not only ask for volunteers, but also show what existing crews are doing).
- FWG is now sending out an e-newsletter. No postage or photocopying

costs are involved, and we can direct people to web pages using links in the newsletter.

#### Falcon Watch

- The web site is useful for attracting volunteers to this seasonal activity.
- The archive of previous watches is useful background information for media articles and has been used for OFNC displays.

We also have a simple online calendar on which I mark dates that Council and the various committees meet at the FWG. Because it's online, committee chairs can see which dates are free, then let me know when they'd like to hold their meeting.

We've set up "mailboxes," so that people's personal email addresses do not have to appear on the web site. When Chairs change, the mail can easily be forwarded to a new address without changing the one on the web site. Currently, the following boxes are in use:

*membership@ofnc.ca* - Henry Steger

*tandl@ofnc.ca* - Karen McLachlan Hamilton

*cfn@ofnc.ca* - Francis Cook

*birds@ofnc.ca* - Chris Traynor

*rarebirds@ofnc.ca* - Ken Allison

*inquiries@ofnc.ca* - Marilyn and Jim Ward

*fletcher@ofnc.ca, publications@ofnc.ca, ofnc@ofnc.ca, webmaster@ofnc.ca* -  
Sandy Garland

#### Uses by the public

Reports on the use of our web site during the previous two months are available on the Magma web site. Some of this information is difficult to interpret as the number of "hits" includes every piece of information on our server. So, for example, a typical page with three photos would get seven hits every time someone visits it: the page itself, the three photos, the style sheet, the navigation menu, and the top-of-page button. However, the reports are useful in terms of revealing "bad links," showing the relative popularity of various web pages, and seeing trends over time.

The areas that consistently appear at the top of the most-requested list are birding (especially Where to go birding in the Ottawa area), *CFN* (the main index page as well as contents of recent issues and annual indices), and FWG (main pages and new pages publicized through the newsletter).

## We get mail

### Typical queries

- Can I order this book?
- What is the status of the article I submitted to *CFN*? When will the next issue be out?
- Can I get a copy of this *CFN* article?
- Where can I find birds? Recent example: a birding excursion was flying through and wanted to know what birds they could expect to see during their 20 minutes on the ground at Ottawa airport.
- What is this bird in my backyard (photo included)?
- I want to go on this excursion; where is the meeting place?
- I'm writing my thesis. Does your club have information about XXX? We usually put the students in touch with a Club member who has expertise in their field of study.
- A variety of questions about nature, mainly to the FWG. What made these footprints? Can I possibly be seeing a coyote in my backyard? Can I put bird feeders on my balcony downtown?

### Cost

\$39.95/month to our ISP.

Starting this year, Council voted to pay the webmaster an honorarium of \$1500 annually. I spend an average of 20 hours a month on the web site, so the Club is paying a little over \$6 an hour for web work. And it is getting free 24-hour technical support from my husband, Roger Camm.

### Untapped potential uses

- Membership renewal – save the cost of postage by sending membership renewal notices and reminders by email.
- E-publishing (*CFN*, *T&L*) – save cost of paper, printing, postage by publishing these periodicals on line. However, costs are still associated with preparing *CFN* articles, layout, and indexing.
- Getting urgent messages to members, letting them know about conservation issues, for example.
- Publicizing the work of the Education and Publicity and, Excursions and Lectures Committees, which provides information, lectures, slide shows, leaders for walks, etc., to the public as well as to Club members.
- Council minutes – post minutes to increase communication between Council and members.
- Increasing book sales by improving our publications section.

However, only 35% of members have email or have provided an email address on

their membership renewal form. This may be a vast underestimate as current statistics indicate that 80% of Canadians have Internet access. Members may need an incentive to provide their address to the OFNC.

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## The Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards for Young Ornithologists

*Long Point Bird Observatory*

The Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards offers people aged 13-17 an opportunity to experience "hands-on" training in field ornithology. Participants are taught how to identify, age, and sex birds as well as learn about avian behaviour and population dynamics. Participants will also experience regular field trips, slide shows and some nocturnal field work.

The workshop is 10 days long and will be held from Friday 3 August 2007 through to Sunday 12 August 2007 at the Long Point Bird Observatory.

The Doug Tarry award covers accommodation, meals and travel costs while attending the workshop; however recipients are responsible for getting to and from Long Point.

Interested individuals can obtain application forms from either the website ([www.bsc-eoc.org/lpbo/yow.html](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/lpbo/yow.html)) or from Stuart MacKenzie at [lpbo@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:lpbo@bsc-eoc.org).

**Deadline for applications is 30 April 2007.**

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# Great Canadian Bio-Blitz (May 26-27, 2007)

## Macoun Marsh, Beechwood Cemetery

*Heather Hamilton*

To celebrate International Biodiversity Day, the Canadian Biodiversity Institute (CBI) is holding a Bio-blitz at the Macoun Marsh in Beechwood Cemetery all day Saturday and Sunday, May 26 and 27. CBI (an environmental non-governmental organization based in Ottawa) the originator of the Great Canadian Bio-Blitz, is working with the Educarium, a private school in east end Ottawa to organize the event. Michael Leveille (winner of the OFNC Mary Stuart teaching award in 2006) developed the on-going Macoun Marsh biodiversity project several years ago. In 2006, the Macoun Marsh Project won one of the top spots in the prestigious global competition called the **Volvo Adventure**, a partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme. This Bio-blitz will be the inaugural event of the new outdoor classroom being built at the edge of the marsh.

On Saturday morning Beechwood Cemetery will host an official opening for the outdoor classroom with a reception to follow. Without the strong continuing support of the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation the marsh project would not exist. The United Nations Biodiversity Secretariate will have a representative at this event to highlight its focus on public education and outreach.

Throughout the event, there will be working tables set up in the outdoor classroom and a couple of tents, provided by Beechwood, to display Educarium materials about species already found (over 1,000) in the marsh over the years, as well as interesting climate change data that has been collected. The theme of this year's Biodiversity Day is climate change. The Canadian Museum of Nature will also have displays and educational materials with resource people on site. Microscopes will be set up to help identify new material brought in. Expert participants will go out into the marsh and surrounding area to collect and identify species, and be available to talk with the public about what they have found. There will be field stations with knowledgeable people set up to guide the public. Educarium and Jean Vanier students, who know the marsh so well, will be very active in this aspect of the programme.

While the focus of the Bio-blitz will be on insects, other invertebrates, lichens and bryophytes, we will have experts also looking for other species in better known groups such as birds, plants, mammals, etc. This will be a great educational event for

everyone, especially children. An additional event on one evening of the Blitz (to be determined) will feature a “Creatures of the Night” programme to look and listen for bats and frogs, and to find moths and other nocturnal insects.

Another important feature of the weekend will be a “Pollinator Monitoring” Workshop given by Jim Dyer, who has been instrumental in developing the programme which is sponsored by EMAN (Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Network) at Environment Canada. The workshop will take place at the Educarium. It would be great to get this new national programme going in the Ottawa area and members of OFNC are encouraged to participate. Advance registration will be required. Please contact Heather Hamilton at *hhamilton@magma.ca* or 613-826-2190 for more details on this workshop or any other aspects of the Bio-blitz as we get closer to the date. All events are free of charge.

We look forward to having the OFNC as a partner and invite members, their families and friends to participate with us in this exciting event to celebrate International Biodiversity Day and the wonders of the Macoun Marsh, a valuable and unique urban biodiversity oasis in the middle of Ottawa!

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## Falcon Watch 2007

*Eve Ticknor*

We are getting ready for our 11<sup>th</sup> season of monitoring our Peregrine Falcon family. Each year volunteers take turns watching young falcons take their first steps in the world as they leave their home on the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ottawa. See them take their wings and, just in case they need a little help, make sure they get home safely.

The pay is nonexistent but the rewards are limitless. It is an opportunity to help an endangered species, to increase public awareness and learn about falcons. It may also be considered volunteer time for high school students aged 16 or older.

Our season runs about three weeks during the second half of June. We work in small groups and no prior experience is necessary. For more information, and notes on previous watches, check the OFNC website ([www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca)) and follow the links to the falcon watch.

If you have a few hours to give, please contact Eve Ticknor at 613-737-7551 or 613-859-9545 or by email at *sandbird@magma.ca*.

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# News from the FWG: Winter 2006-2007

*Christine Hanrahan*



*FWG pond in winter. Photo by C. Hanrahan*

Autumn can be a busy time in the garden, especially if the weather cooperates. Winter, however, is a time to relax and contemplate what we've accomplished in the previous year. It is also a time to think of the year to come, to make plans, to dream, and hope. But as winter edges towards spring, it also becomes time to get ready for the busy season ahead.

## **Backyard Garden News**

Jay Ladell has been the BYG Manager since spring 2003, but now, with an increasingly busy work and family life, he finds that he must step back from his role and let another take over. He developed a creative set of plans for the BYG, which has been mostly implemented. My personal favourites are the stone walls and the

rock garden, both of which add tremendous character and interest to the garden. He also revitalized and revamped our plant sale, making it into a top quality event that people come to year after year. We'd like to thank Jay profusely for his dedication to the garden. Many thanks, Jay!

In the meantime, we're looking for someone with gardening experience, knowledge of native plants and the ability to work with a group of volunteers. If you think you would enjoy devoting one Friday morning a week during the spring, summer and fall to this effort, in the company of a group of congenial and very friendly people, give us a call at 613-234-6767 and leave a message.

We're also always looking for more volunteers for the BYG. So, if you enjoy gardening in a wonderful natural setting, want to learn more about native plants and/or gardening for wildlife, and have time to spare, why not volunteer? Contact info as above.

### **Signs**

We're quite proud of our new map sign-bulletin board by the parking lot, and hope you've had a chance to stop and check it out. Interesting items from the FWG blog as well as other notices are posted. Next up, we're planning to erect signs to identify the major habitats at the garden. They should be in place by this summer, thanks once again to the work of Charlie Clifford.

### **Coming Events**

#### **Saturday, May 12. International Migratory Bird Day.**

The FWG has been participating in this event since 1996. This year's theme is climate change and its impact on bird life. Join us at the FWG from 10 a.m. to 12 noon for a guided birding walk, free refreshments and information about birds and birding.

#### **Saturday, June 2. Annual Native Plant Sale.**

**9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** Please join us once again at the FWG, for this popular sale. Where else can you find such a selection of native plants at such a good price! Donations of native plants warmly accepted. This is the major fund-raising event for the FWG. Contact us at 613-234-6767.

**Walks at the FWG.** Keep your eyes on our bulletin boards for details of informal nature walks at the FWG led by various volunteers.

### **Problems**

During Winterlude, security in the Arboretum is stepped up, with police officers on ATVs patrolling the site. We are told this is primarily to prevent theft and vandalism

from vehicles at this busy time of the season. We certainly have no quarrel with this worthwhile endeavour. However, we do not understand why they feel it necessary to ride through the habitats, along our narrow trails, and over the pond bridge at FWG. There are no parking lots in the middle of the garden. Neither the trails nor the bridge were built to withstand the onslaught of frequent ATV use. We voiced our complaints more than a few times, both in person and by email, but have been, at this point anyway, ignored.

Although it pains me to say it, we are also having problems with some of the dog owners at the garden. They seem to view the FWG as a wasteland where their dogs can chase wildlife and run wherever they want. I have spoken to some of these owners, and it is a small minority that refuse to listen. Telling these people that we set up the garden for wildlife, not dogs, does no good. It is a conundrum for us, since those of us most intimately connected as volunteers with the garden are dog owners ourselves. Fortunately, the good dog owners far outweigh the bad, and help us in many, many ways, but the few bad apples make for a huge problem. The saddest thing, for me anyway, is finding the animals killed by the dogs.

### **Plants and Animals**

The unusually warm weather throughout November, December and most of January, with very little snow cover until the latter part of January, led many to wonder how the wildlife would cope with such peculiar conditions. Around the garden, birds migrated through and winter visitors arrived as usual. However, this is not to say that the disturbingly warm weather won't have had an impact that we don't, as yet, know about.

#### **Birds**

An unusually late White-crowned Sparrow was found in mid-December near the OFNC feeder at the garden. It was seen for only a few days. No winter finches or Bohemian Waxwings have been reported at the garden thus far (mid-February). The only owl sighting was that of a Great Horned Owl, briefly seen in the Ash Woods. A Northern Shrike was observed fleetingly on February 2. Up to six American Robins could be seen in the Ravine, often drinking from the running water trickling under the bridge. Dark-eyed Juncos flit between the farm areas, the Arboretum and the FWG,



*Downy Woodpecker. Photo by C. Hanrahan.*

but I've not seen more than six at any time this winter. A first year male American Kestrel was noted in January, and again in early February.

By the time this issue of the update arrives, spring will have arrived and many of the early migrants will be back in the garden again. Keep your eyes peeled for the 'firsts', the first Red-winged Blackbird, first Tree Swallow, first Eastern Phoebe . . .

### ***Other Fauna***

In the fall, I began writing a series of articles about the common mammals found at the FWG. So far, articles on the Eastern Chipmunk, Eastern Grey Squirrel, Muskrat, Red Fox, and Red Squirrel have been completed and can be found on the FWG website complete with lots of photos at: <http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/alphabet.php>.

During the winter months, we see the signs of animal presence more often than the animals themselves. The exception, of course, is the very vocal and visible Red Squirrel! While I never see more than a few Eastern Cottontails around the garden at any one time, it often looks like we have an entire army of them feeding on sumac. What with rabbits chewing the stems from the ground up and squirrels, both red and grey, chewing the branches, it seems a miracle that we have any sumacs left at all. Fortunately, these important wildlife shrubs are fast growing and fast spreading. The foxes, absent for over a year, are back at their main den site, or at least, two have been seen there sporadically since mid-January. Occasionally, we see their tracks at FWG. Other mammals found around the garden in winter are Meadow Voles, mice, and Eastern Grey Squirrels. All of them common species, if not always commonly found. And yet, how much do we really know about these animals we see, or see signs of, every day?

### **FWG Volunteers**

Over the past year I've been profiling our FWG volunteers. Most of them are happy to remain anonymous. However, even fellow volunteers don't always know much about the folk they work alongside. I think it is fitting that our volunteers are given a voice. This issue, we are looking at one of the hardest working people on the FWG Management Committee, **Charlie Clifford**.

When I asked Charlie if he would mind being profiled for this update, he expressed surprise that I'd consider him, when, in his opinion, others have contributed more. The truth is, everyone contributes, each in their own unique way. And not least of all, Charlie, whose support is invaluable. Most significantly, he has become our 'Sign Man', the person behind all the new signs you see at the garden, because he believes that signs will "*enhance the value of the brochures and trail guides of the*



*Charlie Clifford. Photo by C. Hanrahan.*

sale.

It fascinates me how people find their way to the FWG, and why. In Charlie's case, the process began, as it has for others, with birds. In 1992 he joined the Monday Morning Birding Group (MMBG), which led to him joining the OFNC. In those days, the group was comprised of some familiar names including Annette Murray, still a regular Friday morning volunteer at the BYG. About a decade after joining the birding group, Charlie was invited by Frank Pope to join the OFNC Council. As he explains, *Frank "gave me a copy of the OFNC constitution to check over the various committees. He also gave me a copy of the Terms of Reference for the FWG dated Jan 1998. This may have been a nudge to help make up my mind but it wasn't needed since I found the FWG to be the most interesting of the lot and started to attend their management meetings."*

Charlie began attending Management Committee meetings in 2002 and says "*from the start I was very impressed by the knowledge and skills of the committee members. As a physicist, I had only a layman's understanding of plants, bugs and lichens and these people could rattle off both Latin names and formal details of life cycles!*" Intrigued by what he was seeing and hearing, he mentioned this to Frank who then gave him a copy of a collection of reports called "Contributions To FWG Planning."

FWG." A tremendous amount of time and energy goes into this work, including plotting out the style, design, size, and colour of the signs, investigating and comparing costs, searching out good buys on posts and lumber, buying the material, etc. At present, he is investigating habitat signs for the garden. Long before we had new signs, he refurbished the existing ones and kept them in good repair.

Charlie is also responsible for maintaining the Bill Holland Trail in spring and summer, mowing the path to make walking easy for visitors. As he does this he keeps an eye on the signs and the trail markers, repairing and replacing as needed. He also helps with a number of other tasks, including building plant tables for the plant

Charlie said he found it fascinating “*even when some of the proposals were at cross purposes with each other. I was hooked.*”

Charlie was no stranger to natural history when he joined the FWG. As he said, he was already a long time member of the MMBG, and his background “*included much camping as the family grew and a good number of eco-tours and hikes on nature trails in various countries since retirement.*” He realized, however, that at FWG his best contributions could be made on the support side. With an SUV he was able to “*help transport plants, get the lumber and help David build the bridge at the pond, pull some buckthorn and transport the new lawn mower etc.*”

I asked Charlie what he got out of working at the FWG, and he replied: “*Working at the FWG has had many rewards. These include the continued evolution of the BYG, the enthusiasm and hard work of so many people to fight invasives and to improve the different habitats—especially the Butterfly Meadow and the Pond, the start on better identification of the Bill Holland nature trail, the care of nesting bird sites, the patient explanations to people like me of particular items at the FWG and of course the pleasure of meeting the volunteers at coffee breaks.*” It is our pleasure to work with Charlie at the FWG.

#### **Volunteer**

#### **Opportunities**

After reading about Charlie’s work at the garden, perhaps you feel inspired to join us. We can always use help in removing invasive species, planting trees, working in the BYG, or with any number of other activities. Why not contact us?

Regular volunteer groups meet on Friday morning (BYG), Wednesday evening (Butterfly Meadow) and Sunday morning (the rest of the FWG), spring through fall.

#### **FWG Details and Contact Information**

The FWG is located off Prince of Wales Drive on the Central Experimental Farm. For more information please visit the website at:

<http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher.php>. Brochures about the garden are available from the Centre on Friday mornings from spring through fall, Sunday afternoons in the summer, or during the week June through August when we have a summer employee.

- FWG phone number: 613-234-6767
- David Hobden, Chair, FWG Management Committee: [dhobden@magma.ca](mailto:dhobden@magma.ca)
- Sandy Garland: website and information about the FWG newsletter: [sgarland@magma.ca](mailto:sgarland@magma.ca)
- Christine Hanrahan: bird and wildlife observations: [vanesa@magma.ca](mailto:vanesa@magma.ca)

AAFC Security: 613-759-1985

#### **Acknowledgements:**

As always, thanks to all the volunteers who make FWG happen!

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# Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*)

Connie Clark

"Leaves three, let it be. Berries white, run with fright"



*Poison ivy in autumn. Photo by C. Clark.*

It is difficult to believe how many times you touch your body without being truly

conscious of doing so. For instance, to wipe off sweat, bugs, scratch insect bites, push your hair aside, or apply lotions. If you have ever had a bad case of Poison ivy you may understand better why I say this. When the eruptions begin they seem to keep popping up in places you can't remember scratching and most of the literature will tell you that the Poison ivy resin must touch your skin directly to cause a reaction.

Last summer I had a doozy of a case on my face and abdomen. I spent the better part of a week standing in the shower with water pouring on my face trying to stop the swelling and cool down the raw-meat-like, red hot inflamed areas. These were mostly on my forehead, eyelids, cheeks and throat. One eye was swollen closed. The other was open by only a slit. Going out in public was unthinkable.

In the past, I had been down this road a number of times and I thought I had accumulated enough knowledge, and direct experience, to avoid future episodes. Again, I was proven wrong. However, now confined to home, I decided to turn my "grounded time" into something positive. I researched whatever sources of information were available to me, and consolidated the most poignant points found into an article. Some of the information I found seemed to be contradictory, however, my goal was to share the information found and leave the rest for you to decide.

Poison ivy resin is colourless, scentless, and a tiny bit of spray from crushed Poison ivy cells can even penetrate clothing. The oil can also linger on work gloves, clothes, footwear, tools and your pet's fur coat. Burning Poison ivy is not a smart idea as the resin clings to smoke particles. Inhalation of the smoke may cause swelling of the trachea and suffocation.

Some insects, birds and animals eat Poison ivy without negative consequences. However, it seems humans and higher primates are prone to an allergic reaction to it. The human body brings on the nasty effects usually within 24-48 hours following contact with the plant's oil/resin (urushiol). Some estimate that about 80 per cent of humans are highly allergic to it. However, some people develop an allergy only after more than one contact, some build up a resistance, and some become more sensitive after each bout.

Poison ivy grows in many habitats—areas of sand, rock, thicket, clearings, and borders of woods. According to Health Canada, Poison ivy grows in all Canadian provinces except Newfoundland and is most abundant between Quebec City and the Great Lakes. The plant is a close relative of Poison oak found on the Pacific coast and of Poison sumac of southern Ontario, southern Québec and commonly in the eastern United States.

The shape of the leaf can vary. It may be toothed or not. As the year progresses its colour can change from red, to green, yellow, orange, and back to red. Sometimes the leaves turn brilliant red in autumn, hence the name *Rhus* (red/orange). Some articles list it as a member of the cashew family (Anacardiaceae) which includes mangoes and Japanese lacquer tree. Other articles list it as a member of the sumac family. The plant has a woody base and can grow as an erect shrub, a prostrate ground cover, or as a vine. In vine form it sends out aerial roots that cling to the object upon which it is climbing, usually a tree trunk. The roots comprise a vast network of underground rhizomes, and stems often become entwined with whatever is growing beside them. It appears that every bit of the roots, vines and leaves, must be removed or killed or the plant can sprout again. Inconspicuous flowers may blossom in June and July. A cluster of round waxy whitish berries may appear in September and remain on the stem all winter. The plant can spread by seed or reproductive shoots (rhizomes).



*Climbing Poison ivy at Monaghan Forest 2007. Photo by C. Clark.*

Following the Second World War, during the American occupation of Japan, some soldiers suffered dermatitis after they sat on toilet seats varnished with urushiol, a product made from the Japanese lacquer tree. Poison ivy leaves contain this chemical and crushing the leaves or stems at any time of the year will cause its release. Hot humid conditions can inactivate the resin for about a week. On contact, the resin immediately reacts with skin proteins. The problem for primates lies with the body's immune system. Urushiol is an allergen. The human body identifies it as threatening and goes to great lengths to eliminate it. Urushiol penetrates the skin if not washed off before 10 minutes, and binds to skin proteins. This sets off the inflammation process. Washing quickly and thoroughly will remove the oil but may not prevent a rash. Following penetration of the surface of the skin, the resin oxidizes and chemically binds to the membranes of white blood cells. The new protein complexes formed attract the attention of patrolling T-lymphocytes (T-cells). These are white blood cells produced in the thymus gland, the immune system's first line of defence. Immune cells release a variety of toxins that destroy the membrane-bound urushiol and everything else around the site. As the skin is damaged, bumps and a rash erupt. Swelling, oozing and finally crusting occur. And while this progression unfolds you mentally fight the urge to scratch the itching sensation from nerve damage. Most of the literature asserts that scratching Poison ivy blisters will not spread the rash, and the rash is not contagious.

As urushiol is water soluble, the most recommended solution to stop it in its tracks is to dilute the chemical by applying LOTS OF WATER. Rubbing alcohol swabs may do. Soap and washcloth are **not** recommended as they can spread the oil over a larger area.

Remove all objects that may have come into contact with Poison ivy oil. Cut and scrub your fingernails. They are the worst source for spreading. Remove jewelry, clothing, shoes, boots, work gloves etc.

Once the reaction is well under way, you may obtain some short-lived relief by bathing in a nearby lake, the shower, or a cool tub of water. The web sites for Poison ivy contain anecdotal stories for many victims along with their ways of coping with the problem. Some suggest hot-to-very hot baths are soothing and effective. This surprised me as my badly inflamed areas radiated quite a bit of burning heat, much like a bad sunburn. Cold water from the shower provided the best relief for me.

In non-severe cases antihistamine or Benadryl tablets may help control some of the itch.

**CALAMINE LOTION** - The label on my bottle reads: Active Ingredients: zinc oxide and calamine. Inactive ingredients: bentonite, calcium hydroxide, glycerin, imidurea

and purified water. CAUTION: Do not apply to blistered, raw or oozing areas of skin. If a burning sensation develops, or if condition persists or worsens, discontinue use and contact your physician. Avoid contact with eyes.

Calamine lotion may also temporarily ease the itching. A friend highly recommends Dr. Reed's Poison Ivy solution, which she has only found available at Guardian Drugs, March Road, Kanata. As this solution evidently has a short shelf life it is not stocked and must be ordered and prepared.

For more severe cases, many physicians recommend a moderate dose of prednisone which one must slowly be weaned off of. Prednisone must be taken at the same time every day (after breakfast). Corticosteroids are synthetic analogues of hormones secreted by the adrenal cortex. They possess anti-inflammatory (glucocorticoid) and/or salt-retaining (mineralocorticoid) properties to varying degrees. Glucocorticoids decrease inflammation and suppress the body's immune responses. This then relieves pain, redness and swelling.

VITAMIN E – Some people suggest applying the oil to blisters to aid healing. This worked in reverse for me and set the healing process back noticeably.

Other commonly used treatments listed in literature and on the web were Jewelweed, Aloe vera, or baths containing any of the following: oatmeal, baking soda, epsom salts, 20 regular tea bags.

To destroy Poison ivy a couple of methods are suggested. One is picking out the roots and stems by hand (well protected of course). The plant then does not regenerate from plant fragments. Another method uses chemicals: herbicides with amitrole, simazine, ammonium sulfamate, glyphosate, 2-4D, mecoprop, or dicamba may work.

SO, WHAT GOOD IS POISON IVY? As one article said: it provides ground cover, prevents erosion, feeds moose, deer and birds and keeps people on nature paths.

BAD NEWS FOR THE FUTURE - Based on the research results of a six-year study recently carried out in the United States, we can expect global warming to cause super-sized, extra-itchy Poison ivy within a few decades. Carbon Dioxide translates to additional photosynthesis, and plants exposed to extra carbon dioxide produce a more poisonous form of urushiol, and spread vines faster. So there you have it! Perhaps I am the bearer of bad news, however, it is my hope that you will be able to benefit positively from my sharing it with you.

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- Nesmaith, Jeff, Uh-oh: Think poison ivy's bad now?, Globe and Mail (Washington, May 30, 2006).
- Spears, Tom, Another greenhouse-gas hazard: Giant, extra-itchy poison ivy, The Ottawa Citizen, May 2006.
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*Poison ivy with berries. Photo by C. Clark.*

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# Red Squirrels at the FWG

*Christine Hanrahan*

The American Red Squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*, is an engagingly feisty little animal, one that defines the word “cute”. Although primarily a creature of coniferous forests, the diurnal red squirrel also inhabits deciduous woodlands and can even be found in suburban and near-urban areas throughout their range. It is their adaptability in terms of both habitat and food sources (see below) that has made them remarkably successful.

## Habits

Red squirrels are heard almost as often as they are seen. Their vocalizations range from soft ‘clucking’ sounds, to high-pitched bird-like tones (that often cause beginning birders to ask what that bird is), to the more familiar loud, angry-sounding chatter that occurs when an intruder is spotted. In fact, this latter vocalization is one of the more common sounds heard not only in forests and woodlands, but at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG).

These delicate looking little animals, weighing not much more than about 230 g, are in fact aggressively fearless, not at all reluctant to chase intruders many times their size. People get a kick out of seeing these squirrels literally stamping their feet, flicking their tails, and scolding vociferously in what seems like a paroxysm of rage. Anyone who has ventured near one of their food sources has been treated to this display. At times they get so agitated that they nearly fall out of the tree in their anxiety to see the interloper off. They can often be seen chasing away the larger gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) who rarely put up a fight when confronted by these red terrors. A few years ago, I watched a red squirrel quite literally riding on the back of a gray squirrel and repeatedly biting its head. The gray was running, with difficulty, trying to shake the smaller animal from its back, with no success. I don’t know what the outcome was because the gray managed to climb a tree and vanish, still with the red on its back! Was this simply a matter of chasing away an intruder taken to extreme, or was there a more insidious intent, with the gray being viewed as food?

As feisty as they are, and predatory on others, they are themselves preyed upon. At the FWG their biggest enemy is probably the domestic dog, but owls, hawks, weasels and foxes will also take these creatures. One year, we had a shorttail weasel or ermine (*Mustela erminea*) take up residence in the doorframe of the Interpretive

Centre. The mother moved in her four or five young, and then went hunting for food. The first thing she brought back was a young red squirrel, considerably bigger than she was. Other volunteers at the garden have noticed Red-tailed Hawks eating red squirrels, and the Great Horned Owls that sometimes stay around, although primarily nocturnal, will supplement their diet with both red and gray squirrels.

### **Feeding Habits**

Unlike the gray squirrel whose diet consists largely, though not exclusively, of nuts and seeds, red squirrels are complete omnivores, consuming a tremendous variety of food. They are successful predators of bird eggs, nestlings, voles, young rabbits, frogs, salamanders, and insects. In fact, I recall reading that it will eat anything that will not eat it. At the FWG, I watched a red squirrel attempt to take the eggs from an American Goldfinch nest lodged high in a Manitoba maple (*Acer negundo*). The adult birds were calling and flying around the squirrel who, initially undeterred, abandoned his quest when other birds joined in the fray. Their success as predators of eggs and nestlings gives them a bad name with some biologists concerned about their predation on songbirds with already low populations.

Some years ago, I found a red squirrel feeding on the hindquarters of a melanistic gray squirrel (Hanrahan 2002). I never knew whether the gray squirrel had been killed by the red squirrel, or whether, as seems more likely, it had simply come across the animal already deceased and had taken advantage of a good source of protein (the flesh) and calcium and minerals (the bones). I watched this squirrel for a long time and it both ate the meaty part of the gray squirrel and gnawed on the bones. I have also seen red squirrels gnawing on bones of various animals, including those of a rabbit at the FWG.

Added to the carnivorous selection are nuts, seeds, buds, bark, fruits, mushrooms (which are often hung to dry in tree branches) and, in spring, the sap of trees. And indeed, the red squirrel is an excellent sap-tapper, knowing the right time of year to gnaw away the tips of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) twigs allowing the sap to flow.

If you look underneath conifers at the FWG, you'll find great piles of cones placed there by red squirrels. They will chew off the branches holding the cones and let them fall to the ground. Every so often they will descend to stack them into piles, before going back to gather more. We have found these piles underneath Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*) and Scotch pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). In some areas I have found middens nearly 3.5 feet deep, but most are much smaller. In late winter and early spring, there may be a carpet of spruce cuttings beneath the trees. Red squirrels will snip off the tips of branches and then scuttle down the tree to feed on the buds. Black walnuts (*Juglans nigra*) and Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) are two more favourite food sources under which you can find similar piles of nuts.

They will also stack nuts and cones close to, but not underneath, the source. I've also watched red squirrels at the FWG eating Manitoba maple seeds, staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*) seeds, and crabapples (*Malus* spp.).

One fascinating aspect of watching red squirrels is finding where they have set up 'dining tables'. Logs, stumps, rocks, brush piles, all serve the purpose, but the prettiest and most intriguing 'table' I have found (not at the FWG) was a set of very large polypores, or bracket fungi, where it was clear that the squirrel had dined at leisure on a variety of foods.

While most food is stored above ground, red squirrels will also bury some in underground tunnels. You may occasionally see these holes, somewhat larger than those of Eastern Chipmunks (*Tamias striatus*), often with a litter of cone bracts right outside or nearby. In winter, this species also makes snow tunnels which allow it to run from one food source to another in relative safety.

### **Reproduction**

Red squirrels build large grassy nests, familiar sights to anyone who walks around the FWG. In the first years of the garden's life, they built their nests primarily in the tall spruce and pines that existed on-site before the area became the FWG. As other trees have matured, and as the squirrel population has expanded, they have taken to making nests in deciduous trees, sometimes in less than ideal situations. For example, the red squirrels living near the pond made a large grassy nest on the branches of a walnut tree overhanging the pond. This nest disintegrated fairly quickly. Others have been made in sumacs, Manitoba maples, red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), crabapples and a variety of other shrubs and trees. The best support and the greatest protection is offered by conifers, particularly spruce, and nests made in these trees last longer. In other areas the red squirrel nests are made of leaves and twigs. In Larose Forest I've noticed fewer nests (and more cavities) and those I have found have been largely made of twigs and leaves. At the FWG, grass is abundant and therefore an easily acquired material.

Many of the grassy nests fall down at some point of course, and I've looked at a number of them. There is very little other vegetative matter used apart from grass although some have been lined with bits of bark or vines and leaves. But two nests near the Interpretive Centre are certainly a departure—one contained large pieces of landscape cloth and plastic, while another nearby showed smaller amounts of this material. Another nest in the Arboretum also showed strips of plastic. These large bulky nests, particularly those in deciduous trees, are used primarily in summer, although they may also be used to a more limited extent in winter. However, at the FWG, some of the squirrels use nest boxes for rearing young instead of the grassy nests. And sometimes they will use both, moving their young from a grassy nest to a

nest box when the young are a few weeks old. I've occasionally seen red squirrels denning under logs and under stone piles, but this appears to be an unusual rather than a common occurrence.

Young red squirrels are usually born in April through to early May. Tiny and naked at first, they grow quickly and within a month are almost fully furred. One spring, Dale Crook, a FWG volunteer, and myself, were cleaning out nest boxes. In the Old Field habitat we opened a box and out fell four tiny just-born squirrels. We quickly put them back in the box along with nest material and then Dale watched over the next few weeks to make sure they had survived. They had. And one day the mother moved them, one by one, to another nest box from where they soon emerged into the world. We've also had them nesting in the roof of the Interpretive Centre which must have seemed like a wonderfully warm and capacious cavity! In the summer of 2006, I noticed three young red squirrels in a nest box in the Old Field. They were sharing quarters with two gray treefrogs (*Hyla versicolor*). I was sure the frogs would quickly be eaten, but they weren't. The squirrels soon left the box and the treefrogs remained.

Nobody knows for sure how long a red squirrel lives, but it is estimated that in the wild it is probably one to three years. At the FWG, our population seems to be doing quite well. Their numbers have increased over the years as the garden has matured with trees, particularly evergreens, planted 15 years ago now.

### **Territories**

At the FWG, the red squirrels have set up very distinct and separate territories. In the wild, their population density would probably be much less than it is at the FWG. We have at least 10 (and perhaps more) red squirrels on five hectares. In wilderness areas, estimates show that there would likely be about one red squirrel for every two hectares. If that was true at FWG, we'd only have 2 ½ squirrels! Red squirrels tend to have fairly small home ranges and at FWG this can be clearly seen. Once you have figured out where they are, you can almost guarantee that you'll find them in the same location day after day.

One enterprising pair grabbed a nest box situated between two walnut trees some years ago and they, or their descendants, have been there ever since. Another squirrel took up residence beneath the red barn in 2006, and used a nearby fallen log as its dining table where the remains of walnuts and cones could be found in abundance.

### **Winter**

Unlike some animals, red squirrels do not hibernate; they go into a state of torpor, or remain inactive for long periods of time during the winter months. Hoarding great

amounts of food ensures their survival in even the coldest weather. In coniferous forests where there is a greater dependence on cone supplies to get them through the winter, many animals will die when the cone crop is limited. And since cone crops are cyclical, red squirrels are more abundant in some years than others. However, in areas such as the FWG where they have ready access to a greater variety of food, they are usually able to successfully make it through the winter.

In addition to their industrious caching of food, red squirrels also develop a very thick fur coat. Look at the red squirrels in winter and see how much bushier their coats look compared to those in the warmer seasons. Most non-hibernating animals develop similarly thick coats, including our domestic dogs and cats when housed outdoors.

The third ingredient for surviving winter successfully involves having a snug, warm, dry place to spend the night and those rare days, when the weather is so fierce that even red squirrels don't venture out. Cavities in trees afford much warmth, and around the FWG, nest boxes



*Red Squirrel. Photo by C. Hanrahan*

are good alternatives. Sometimes squirrels will create a winter den under a tree stump or fallen log. Whether they actually use underground dens seems open to debate. Of all the reading I have done on this species over the years one thing is clear—some authors believe they use underground dens, and others believe they don't. There is no doubt that they are quite comfortable going underground, and will make limited use of tunnels to store some food. During the winter months I have come across many holes leading underground (as opposed to snow tunnels which remain above ground), most with heaps of cone bracts around the entrance. Whether they are subterranean food chambers or places to spend the night, I am not sure. One way to discover this would be to dig up some of the tunnels and see what is there, but I wouldn't have the heart to do this in winter in case they are being used as shelter.

Red squirrels are endlessly entertaining and their behaviour coupled with their undeniable cuteness, makes them a favourite even of people who profess not to like squirrels.

If you have any stories about red squirrels that you've observed around the FWG, we'd be happy to hear about them. You can contact the FWG or you can contact me directly at [vanessa@magma.ca](mailto:vanessa@magma.ca).

### **Reference**

Hanrahan, Christine. 2002. Red Squirrel Feeding on the Remains of a Grey Squirrel. *T&L* 36(4): 138-140.

### **More Reading**

Banfield, A.W.F. 1974. The Mammals of Canada. University of Toronto Press, 438 pp.

Forsyth, Adrian. 1985. Mammals of the Canadian Wild. Camden House, 351 pp.

Woods, Jr., S.E. 1980. Squirrels of Canada. National Museum of Natural Sciences, 199 pp.

For more photographs of red squirrels and information on other animals at the FWG, please go to:

Red Squirrel - *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

[http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our\\_animals/squirrels/red-squirrels\\_e.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our_animals/squirrels/red-squirrels_e.php).

Eastern Chipmunk - *Tamias striatus*

[http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our\\_animals/chipmunk/chipmunk\\_e.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our_animals/chipmunk/chipmunk_e.php)

Grey Squirrel - *Sciurus carolinensis*

[http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our\\_animals/squirrels/grey-squirrels\\_e.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our_animals/squirrels/grey-squirrels_e.php)

Muskrat - *Ondatra zibethicus*

[http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our\\_animals/muskrat/muskrat\\_e.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/our_animals/muskrat/muskrat_e.php)

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# The Tree that Ate the Zebra Finches

*Alan and Carol German*

When Mick Atzeni, President of the Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc., placed a notice on the club's web site inviting "anyone" to join one of the groups conducting the October bird census, he probably didn't bargain on a couple of Canadian birders responding. But, that's exactly what happened.

We were planning to visit eastern Australia during the month of October and were scouring the Internet looking for "hot" birding locations and tips on where to find particular species. Not that we were too particular about the latter. There is very little overlap in the birds found in North America and in Australia. So, for us, any bird was going to be a good bird!

Mick was kind enough to invite us to join his team for the census. And so, early on Saturday morning we climbed aboard the vehicle and started out on the adventure. The any-bird theory was soon substantiated as Mick quickly went through our list to date. "You haven't seen xxx" was a regular refrain as he reviewed the unchecked listings for many common (to him!) species. Sure, but we found birding in Australia pretty difficult. It's obvious that Australian birds are incredibly shy. They sit amongst the deepest, densest foliage and never move. They do call out, but if you don't know any songs—and they don't ever move—they are pretty hard to spot, let alone identify. (Note to self—buy the bird song CD before the next trip to Oz.)

So, with shy birds everywhere, the census technique proved to be quite illuminating. With Laurie Atzeni at the wheel of the truck, Mick had all the windows open. Both Mick and Laurie were listening intently, as the vehicle moved along, and were listing multiple species in quick succession. Meanwhile Olive Booth tried desperately to keep a faithful record of what had been seen, in which sector. Quite an impressive display of teamwork!

Meanwhile the Canadians were basically along for the ride, not knowing any of the songs, and so unable to help in any meaningful way. But, then came a chance—a favourite stop, with the promise of target species, yielded—a pair of Zebra Finches on the fence line at the side of the road. But, of course, by the time the assembled crew had poured out of the vehicle, the birds had flown—straight into the foliage of one of those Australian trees. And, despite the group surrounding the tree, those little guys were nowhere to be seen. The wind was blowing, and the leaves were swaying,

but there was nary a feather to be observed. And, these birds didn't know the rules. They kept quiet, in addition to remaining hidden. Finally, it was obvious that the finches had somehow escaped, unnoticed by any of us, or else had been eaten by the tree!

So, it was time to admit defeat on this species, and give up the quest. But then, as we climbed back into the truck and started off down the road, two little birds peeled out of the tree, and flew down the road ahead of us. Finally, they settled back down on the fence line, thinking that they were hidden by sparse vegetation. But, they were obviously unaware of the power of binoculars and so were fairly readily observed despite their best efforts at concealment.

Quite a few species proved to be equally difficult. Ask Mick about the Mistletoebirds that he saw everywhere, but of which the Canadians could never get a good view until, once again, one male made the mistake of sitting still for thirty seconds!

But, perhaps we are being unkind to Australian birds. They weren't all so uncooperative. At one point we had three different species of fairy-wrens in view at the same time. The Hobby perched on top of a tree long enough to get the "scope" focussed. And, there was no missing the Pink-eared Duck in the middle of the pond. But, for most species, we certainly needed the help of our new birding friends—to identify the Channel-billed Cuckoo in flight at long range, and the Pale-headed Rosellas whizzing past our field of view at high speed.

But, all joking aside, we had a terrific morning's birding. We came away with over twenty life birds, and a true appreciation for the skills of our companions. We met more of the group over lunch for a preliminary review of the species seen across the different areas covered and it was great to see the enthusiasm of these birders.

But, as the group broke up and headed home, we weren't quite finished. Olive took us to Mick's work place where a couple of new (to us) species were possible. Sure enough, she soon located the nesting Tawny Frogmouth, a bark-plumaged bird sitting bolt upright against a background of bark. Now, there's a species that's just a little different from anything we see in the Great White North! And, while we couldn't locate the Musk Lorikeets, there was another bonus bird in store for us. The adult frogmouth was snapping his (or her) beak. Initially we thought that this was because it was annoyed at the Pied Butcherbird (Number 23 for the day!) that was swooping down and hitting the Frogmouth on the top of its head. But, then Olive discovered another possible reason. At the foot of the tree, immediately adjacent to where we were standing, was one of the nestlings, barely able to fly, and probably in a location of considerable concern to its parent. Time to back slowly away, return to the car,

and head home—after a really memorable experience—at the end of a really memorable day.

Thanks everyone for letting us join your census. We hope that you all had just as good a day as we did. But we seriously doubt that any of you got 23 lifers!



*Olive Booth and Carol German review the fine points of the plumage of the Tawny Frogmouth*

Editor's Note: This article was originally printed in the January issue of the Toowoomba Bird Observers Inc. newsletter as a form of appreciation for the club's generosity. Although the Germans' experience stretched beyond the 50 km radius, the article was, for me, such a good read that I thought it should be shared. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

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# Bird Highlights from the 50K (2006)

*Chris Lewis*

The past year was an eventful one, both bird-wise and weather-wise. Several exciting rarities were discovered, thanks to the myriad vigilant observers on both the Ontario and Québec sides of the 50K (the area within a 50 km radius of the Peace Tower). One of the warmest summers on record segued into one of our mildest and most precipitation-free fall and winter periods, leading to some interesting and even amazing sightings in terms of late dates and numbers. Here are some of the highlights . . .

## RARITIES

(*very rare / vagrant to the Ottawa-Gatineau area*)

**SNOWY EGRET** - 1 on 31 May, ponds near "The Marshes" golf course, Kanata.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** - 1 juvenile, 14 - 21 August, High Falls Conservation Area, Casselman.

**CATTLE EGRET** - 1 probable adult in non-breeding plumage, 03 - 07 October, Casselman sewage lagoon and nearby barnyard.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER** - 1 juvenile on 04 September, Shirleys Bay.

**RUFF** - 1 female on 19 May, Alfred sewage lagoon (approximately 20 km outside the 50K).

**POMARINE JAEGER** - 1 juvenile on 30 September, east end of Andrew Haydon Park (a.k.a. "Ottawa Beach").

**GREAT GRAY OWL** - "echo" of the great invasion of 2005. At least 18 individuals were reported from 22 January - 12 March, in various locations.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** - 1 juvenile on 19 October, Dick Bell Park.

**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** - 1 from late December 2005 - 01 April 2006, Reeve Craig and Baxter Conservation Area near Kars.

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** - 1 male on 16 May, Thomas Dolan Parkway west of Dunrobin. The bird was observed singing and being chased off by a male "**BREWSTER'S**" **WARBLER** (Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler hybrid). The Blue-winged was not seen again, however the Brewster's remained highly vocal and territorial at this location through the end of May.

**LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** - 1 singing male, 02 - 07 May, Gatineau Park along the Waterfall trail below McKenzie King Estate.

**CONNECTICUT WARBLER** - 1 immature or female on 19 August, Britannia Conservation Area.

- 1 immature or female on 08 September, Larose Forest.

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** - 1 male, early January to at least 12 March, Forest Park, Embrun.

#### **NOTEWORTHY SPECIES**

*(locally rare, usually occur as individuals or in very small numbers, may not be found every year or require special effort to locate)*

##### **Greater White-fronted Goose**

- SPRING - 1 from 26 - 31 March, Milton Rd (NE of Carlsbad Springs).
  - 1 from 02 April - 03 May, Jock River at Twin Elm and the Moodie Dr. quarry pond.
- FALL/ WINTER - up to 3 individuals, from 14 October - 19 November, Moodie Dr. pond; 1 still present on 3 December.
  - 1 from 19 -20 December, Alfred sewage lagoons.

##### **Ross' Goose**

- 2 on 05 April, Ste-Rose, east of Casselman (just outside the 50K).
- 1 on 18 April, Petersen Sod Farm near Manotick Station.
- 1 on 23 April, north of Navan.
- 1 on 08 May, Winchester sewage lagoons.

##### **Cackling Goose**

Since this species was split from Canada Goose in 2004, small numbers have been reported annually during spring and fall migration

##### **Tundra Swan**

- SPRING - 7 from 25 March - 07 April, flooded fields in Bearbrook area (Milton Rd./Frank Kenny Rd.). An unusually high number for

Ottawa.

- FALL/WINTER - 4 extremely late birds, 2 adults and 2 immatures, on 25 December, Moodie Dr. quarry pond.

#### **Eurasian Wigeon**

- 1 male on 02 April, Cobbs Lake Creek flood plain, Johnston Rd. east of Bourget.
- 1 male, from 12 -13 April, Marais des Laîches Ouest sector, west of Masson.

#### **Canvasback**

- 3 males from 12 - 15 November, Ottawa River between Dick Bell Park and Grandview Rd.
- 1 female on 02 December, Embrun sewage lagoons.
- 2 on 02 December, below Deschênes Rapids, Ottawa River.

#### **Redhead**

- SPRING - 1 pair on 05 and 09 April, and 3 on 24 April, Moodie Dr. quarry pond.
  - 1 pair, 15 - 19 April, Shirleys Bay.
  - several on 29 May, Alfred sewage lagoons.
- SUMMER/FALL - 2 families on 05 August, Alfred sewage lagoons.
  - 1 male on 20 July and 6 from 04 - 05 October, Embrun sewage lagoons.
  - 5 on 04 September, Constance Bay.
  - 1 very late male on 24 November, Shirleys Bay.

#### **Harlequin Duck**

- 1 male from 25 November - 02 December, Deschênes Rapids.

#### **Barrow's Goldeneye**

- WINTER/SPRING - at least 2 males and 1 female until the end of February, Remic Rapids.
  - 1-2 males on 25 February until at least 11 March, Rideau River near Rideau Tennis Club / Strathcona Park.
- FALL - 1 male on 18 November, Remic Rapids, Ottawa River (still present in January 2007).
  - 1 male (possible same bird as above) from 03 - 12 December, Rideau River between Rideau Tennis Club and Hwy 417 (still present in January 2007).

#### **Hybrid Common X Barrow's Goldeneye**

- 1 male wintered at both the Remic Rapids and Rideau River locations in 2005 and

2006; a male (possibly the same bird) was seen at Remic Rapids from 19 - 26 November 2006.

### **Gray Partridge**

This species has been declining in the Ottawa area for several years.

- approximately 12 on 03 January and 4 on 25 February.
- 4 on 04 October, St. Albert sewage lagoons.
- 9 on 29 October, Regimbald Rd. east of Frank Kenny Rd.

### **Red-throated Loon**

Usually seen in small numbers on the Ottawa River during fall migration. This year a major "fallout" occurred from 13 - 14 November, with at least 222 birds counted from Remic Rapids to Constance Bay. A few individuals continued to be seen on the river until mid-December. Also noteworthy were at least 123 **Common Loons** seen concurrently on the river on 13 November, and large groups of this species lingered for the next 2 - 3 days.

### **Least Bittern**

Locally rare, however for the past 2 years the marshes between Gatineau and Masson, particularly the Marais aux Grenouillettes sector, have been an excellent location to view multiple birds in late June - early July.

### **Great Egret**

Increasingly seen in the 50K, both spring and late summer /early fall.

- 1 from 22 April - 24 May, Rideau River at Billings Bridge.
- 1 from 28 July to at least 27 September, Moodie Dr. quarry pond.
- 3 from 17 - 21 September, Shirleys Bay.
- individuals reported from various other locations in August.

### **Red-tailed Hawk (Dark Morph)**

A rare morph in the eastern part of North America; this was the third consecutive year that an individual has wintered near the Gatineau Executive Airport.

### **Gyrfalcon**

- 1 grey-morph bird from 21 February - 29 March, Central Experimental Farm and Carlington quarry.

### **Peregrine Falcon**

Ottawa's breeding pair had a new female this year; one male offspring was successfully fledged from the nest site on the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

**American Golden Plover**

- approx. 200 on 05 October, St. Albert sewage lagoons.

**Purple Sandpiper**

- 3 on 19 November, Ottawa River at Lakeside Gardens.

**Long-billed Dowitcher**

- 1 juvenile from 04 - 07 October, Casselman sewage lagoons.
- 1 on 14 October, Almonte sewage lagoons.

**Thayer's Gull**

- 1 immature on 09 November, Trail Rd. landfill.

**Caspian Tern**

- 1 on 07 July, Ottawa Beach.
- 2 on 09 - 17 September, Shirleys Bay.

**Arctic Tern**

- group of 15 - 20 on 25 May, flying up the Ottawa River between Deschênes Rapids and Shirleys Bay.

**Red-headed Woodpecker**

This species has been decreasing in the 50K, primarily due to habitat loss. However, at least 2 nest sites have been successful in recent years:

- 2002 - 2006, Pakenham area, 3 adults seen on 23 July.
- 2003 - 2006, Constance Bay, up to 8 birds (adults and juvenile) seen from 28 May - 04 September.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker**

- 1 female, mid-December - at least 16 January 2007, feeder in Bells Corners.

**American Three-toed Woodpecker**

- individual males and females, 04 November - mid-January 2007, Kerwin Rd. west of Kanata.

**Black-backed Woodpecker**

- various locations from 04 November - January 2007.

**Loggerhead Shrike**

No reports in recent years from former local breeding sites.

- 1 migrant seen on 07 May, Huntmar Dr. west of Kanata.

### **Boreal Chickadee**

- 1 wintered until at least late February, Forest Park, Embrun.

### **Carolina Wren**

Oddly, this southern species usually starts showing up in our area in late fall at bird feeders and sometimes winters here. It has rarely bred in the 50K, however a pair successfully nested and raised at least 4 young on a property along Stillwater Dr., Nepean and were still present until at least 17 September.

### **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**

- 1 migrant on 23 April, south of Ottawa International Airport.
- 1 on 14 July, Shirleys Bay.
- 1 on 29 July, Trans-Canada trail, Stoney Swamp.

### **Northern Mockingbird**

Although several have nested in the 50K, the "locally rare" status of this species has remained virtually unchanged.

- 1 wintered on McCordick Rd. near North Gower.
- 7 individuals (an unusually high number of sightings) from early January - 22 May, various locations.
- 1 from 25 September - 08 October, Rifle Rd. south of Shirleys Bay.
- 2 on 17 December, Blossom Park sector on the Ottawa-Gatineau Christmas Bird Count.

### **Cerulean Warbler**

A very small population traditionally breeds in Gatineau Park.

- 1 male seen on 10 May, near Champlain Lookout, Gatineau Park.

### **Palm Warbler (Eastern or "Yellow" Race)**

A rare breeder in our area. At least 1 pair nested again in the Mer Bleue bog this year.

### **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow**

- 2 on 30 September, 1 still present on 04 October, Alfred sewage lagoons.

### **Lincoln's Sparrow**

Rare local breeding species, at least 2 territorial males were seen and heard in the Mer Bleue bog this year.

### **Red Crossbill**

In some years, “irrupts” into our area. This year, an influx occurred from 24 October - 25 November, several flocks of up to 20 birds/flock were reported from various locations. Subsequently, small numbers were noted in transit until mid-December.

### **White-winged Crossbill**

Also an “irruptive” species. Several arrived at approximately the same time as the Red Crossbills. As the season progressed, many remained and began courtship displays, indicating probable nesting in the New Year.

### **Hoary Redpoll**

Like most of the “winter finches” this year, redpolls of *both* species were extremely scarce in our area. The only report of Hoary Redpoll was of a pair seen on 08 January along March Valley Rd.

## **UNUSUAL DATES / NUMBERS**

### **Snow Goose**

An unprecedented number *and* extremely late date! At least 30,000, mostly Greater Snow Geese, were noted east of Ottawa, in the Casselman area from 17 - 25 December.

### **Brant**

Record early date - 1 individual on 06 April, Milton Rd. (NE of Carlsbad Springs).

### **Double-crested Cormorant**

Probable record high number on Ottawa River—at least 600 birds on 30 September, between Remic Rapids and Shirleys Bay. The first confirmed nesting record for the 50K was on a small islet north of the Lemieux Island water purification plant, 09 June - 30 July.

### **Bald Eagle**

Unusual for the 50K were repeated sightings of 2 adults roosting in trees in or near a Great Blue heronry in the Shirleys Bay area, from 25 December into the New Year.

### **Golden Eagle**

Unprecedented spring date - 1 immature bird on 04 June in the Dunrobin area.

### **Sandhill Crane**

Record high count—74 from 13 - 19 November, Milton Rd. (NE of Carlsbad Springs).

### **Bonaparte's Gull**

Thirty extremely late birds on 22 November, St. Albert sewage lagoons.

### **Lesser Black-backed Gull**

Probable record high count—21 on 21 September, Deschênes Rapids.

The birds/dates/locations mentioned in this article were derived from reports to the OFNC Bird Status Line, personal observations and communications, as well as postings to the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) listserve ONTBIRDS.

Sightings of rare species within or near the 50K should be reported to the Bird Status Line at 613-860-9000, and documentation of rarities is strongly recommended.

The OFNC web site [www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca) provides excellent information about birding in the Ottawa area as well as links to many other sites.

Other highly recommended bird information sources on the internet are [ca.geocities.com/larry.neily@rogers.com/birding](http://ca.geocities.com/larry.neily@rogers.com/birding) and the OFO web site at [www.ofo.ca](http://www.ofo.ca).

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## Silent Auction at the Soirée April 28

This year we are trying something new at our annual party—a silent auction of items related to natural history. We already have some lovely donations from several area businesses and we are also seeking donations from our Club members. The sorts of things that we are hoping to get are items related in some way to natural history. Many of us, for example, have natural history books that we no longer need (including childrens' books), or perhaps an older style of snow shoes or skis, or perhaps binoculars, insect net, or a tent that are no longer being used. Auction items will be on display throughout the evening and Soirée participants will be invited to enter their bids. We may even have a live auction for a few choice items. After the main event, honouring our various award winners, we shall award the winning bidders with their purchases. The money raised will be put into the OFNC coffers to replenish any shortfall. It seems that our Club has been dipping into the reserves these last few years. If you wish to donate an item please call Fenja Brodo at 613-723-2054 to make arrangements.

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# The OFNC's Point Pelee Trip for 2007

*Ken Allison*

This May the OFNC is planning its biennial bus trip to Point Pelee National Park. We will be leaving at 6:00 on the morning of Thursday, May 10 and we will be returning at about 6:00 in the evening on Sunday, May 13. The cost for this trip will be \$420, based on double occupancy. If you prefer to have a hotel room to yourself, it will be \$820. The fee includes the bus, hotel, all park entrance fees and breakfast. Lunch and supper are not included.

It is impossible to say at this point exactly where we will go over the weekend, as much will depend on where the birds are. We will certainly spend a full day at Point Pelee National Park, perhaps more.

We hope to spend at least half a day at Rondeau Provincial Park. It is about an hour away from Leamington (where we will be staying), but it always has some birds that can be missed at Point Pelee. In 2005, there was a pair of Prothonotary Warblers at Rondeau that put on a great show. We also had our only Sandhill Crane fly over us there.

Another location that had some good birds in 2005 was Hillman Marsh. One of my personal highlights of that trip was the afternoon there when we had 2000 Black-bellied Plovers put on an aerial show for us. See Roy John's article in the *Trail & Landscape* [40(1):34-42] for the full story and a list of species found on that trip.

This year the timing of our trip should land us right in the peak of the warbler migration. In 2005, we were just a little late, although we still saw or heard 21 species of warblers and 146 species of birds altogether.

In addition to birds, you can expect to see some southern species of reptiles and plants. We found a Fox Snake at Hillman Marsh last time.

There are still openings for this trip, but space is limited by the size of the bus, so please register soon if you would like to participate in this special experience.

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## Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions & Lectures Committee.

For further information,  
call the Club number (613-722-3050).

*Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.*

**ALL OUTINGS:** Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.

**REGISTERED BUS TRIPS:** Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (Payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing. Your cooperation is appreciated by the Committee so that we do not have to wait to the last moment to decide whether a trip should be cancelled due to low registration. In order for the Club to offer a bus trip, we need just over 33 people to register. If fewer than 30 register, we have the option of cancelling the trip or increasing the cost. Such decisions must be done a week in advance so we encourage anyone who is interested in any bus trip to register as early as possible. We also wish to discourage postponing the actual payment of bus fees until the day of the event.

**EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE:** The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation, and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities. Monthly meetings are held in The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor.

**BIRD STATUS LINE:** Phone 613-860-9000 to learn of recent sightings or birding potential in the Ottawa area. To report recent sightings use the 613-860-9000 number and stay on the line. This service is run on behalf of the Birds Committee and is available to members and non-members.

<b>(Good) Friday</b>	<b>BIRDS AND AMPHIBIANS AT NIGHT</b>
<b>6 April</b>	<b>Leader:</b> Bernie Ladouceur
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Meet:</b> Tim Horton Donuts, south side of Robertson Rd. (i.e., Old Hwy. 7) between the Richmond Rd. turnoff and Moodie Dr. in Bells Corners.
<b>to</b>	
<b>11:30 p.m.</b>	Participants have an opportunity to locate and identify nocturnal birds and amphibians such as the Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech Owl, American Woodcock, Common Snipe, Ruffed Grouse, Chorus Frog, Spring Peeper, Wood and Leopard Frogs. Possible areas to visit include Richmond and Munster or other areas south and/or west of Bell's Corners. The outing is limited to 20.
<b>Rain or wind dates:</b>	REGISTER WITH THE CLUB NUMBER 613-722-3050 by April 2. Please leave your phone number in case the trip is postponed to an alternate date.
<b>Saturday</b>	
<b>14 April</b>	
<b>9 p.m. to 1a.m.</b>	
<b>or</b>	
<b>Sunday</b>	
<b>15 April</b>	
<b>7:30-11:30 p.m.</b>	

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>OFNC MONTHLY MEETING</b>
<b>10 April</b>	<b>THE NATURALIST-PHOTOGRAPHER: Making Use of Digital Imaging in the Study of Nature.</b>
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	
<b>Social</b>	<b>Speaker:</b> Bev Wigney
	<b>Location:</b> Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and McLeod Streets, The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor.
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	Nature photographer, Bev Wigney, will share how she utilizes digital images to record, study and share her nature observations. She will use her photographs to illustrate how to make use of images for such things as species identification, tracking changes to habitat, studying animal behaviour, and recording phenological events (photography contestants take note!). Part of this talk will include a discussion of the use of photos in nature blogging. For a sneak preview of what to expect, visit Bev's blog, "Burning Silo" at <a href="http://magickcanoe.com/blog">http://magickcanoe.com/blog</a> .
<b>Speaker</b>	

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<b>Saturday</b>	<b>BIRDING TRIP FOR BEGINNERS</b>
<b>14 April</b>	<b>Leader:</b> Bev McBride
<b>7:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Meet:</b> Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza (or at 7:45 a.m. at the Filtration Plant entrance on Cassels Road).
	On this early morning birding trip we shall look for early migrants returning to, or going through, Ottawa, as well as looking for birds who have lingered here during this winter. This trip will go rain or shine and end by noon at the latest.
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>CANADA'S NORTH - OURS TO PROTECT, THE WORLD'S TO CHERISH</b>
<b>180 April</b>	<b>Location:</b> Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and McLeod Streets, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor (West)
<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	Join us for an informative and engaging evening with an exceptional panel of speakers that includes Jeremy Inglis (Polar Bear research), David Murray (creating northern parks) and David Phillips, Canada's weather guy, author of The Canadian Weather Trivia Calendar and a familiar face and voice on national radio and television. There will be information tables, displays, handouts, and free refreshments. This event is sponsored by the Ottawa Wildlife Festival, the OFNC, Parks Canada and the Canadian Museum of Nature. Admission is free. Please contact Christine at <a href="mailto:vanesa@magma.ca">vanesa@magma.ca</a> for more information.
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>INSECT IDENTIFICATION WORKSHOP</b>
<b>22 April</b>	<b>Location:</b> Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the traffic circle. Map at <a href="http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php">http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php</a> .
<b>10:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Leader:</b> Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054)
<b>to about</b>	This is a beginners workshop (or refresher) focusing on the characteristics that distinguish the major orders of insects such as mayflies, damselflies & dragonflies, grasshoppers & crickets, beetles, butterflies & moths, flies, wasps & bees and some interesting groups that you may never have heard of. There will be microscopes and lots of pinned specimens to work with. Participants will learn how to use identification keys and learn basic insect terminology. This workshop is limited to 12 so register early by calling the number above. Bring a lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided.
<b>4:00 p.m.</b>	

**Saturday  
28 April  
10:00 a.m.**

### **AN APRIL RAMBLE IN THE TACHÉ WOODS**

**Leader:** Eleanor Thomson 613-269-3523 or  
*ersimonyi@ncf.ca*

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.

In this lovely old woodland in the heart of Hull, spring wild flowers will be poking up and birds singing. Field glasses may be useful for seeing flowers on trees as well as songsters. The trip will end in the early afternoon so bring a snack. Contact Eleanor for more information or if you wish to meet at the Taché Woods. This trip takes place rain or shine.

**Saturday  
28 April  
7:30 p.m.**

### **OFNC SOIRÉE**

**Location:** St. Basil's Church, off Maitland, just north of the Queensway.

Come for an evening of fun and celebration at our annual Club event. Several of our Club members will be honoured for their recent contributions. Kids in the Macoun Club will surprise you with their knowledge and their displays. Something new this year is a Silent Auction to add a little spice to the evening (see article in this issue), and also see the insert in the previous *T&L* for other details. For information regarding displays call Phil Jeffreys (613-721-0139), for donations for the Silent Auction call Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054), or for other matters call Marilyn Ward at our Club number 613-722-3050.

**Saturday  
5 May  
8:15 a.m.**

### **BIRD BANDING AT INNIS POINT**

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.

**Leaders:** Eve Ticknor and Dave Britton

Special arrangements have been made to visit the Bird Banding Station at Innis Point. This is a volunteer run station located along the Ottawa River near Shirleys Bay. Register early if interested because this opportunity is limited to the first 20 people who call the Club phone (613-722-3050). This outing will be cancelled if it is raining.

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>OFNC MONTHLY MEETING</b>
<b>8 May</b>	<b>CLIMATE CHANGE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL</b>
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Speaker:</b> Dr. Paul Egginton
<b>social</b>	<b>Location:</b> Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and McLeod Streets, The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor.
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	We have been monitoring climate sensitive aspects of the natural environment, their variability and change through time in the Mississippi Valley area, eastern Ontario. We have evidence that our climate is changing and that the natural environment is responding to this change. Climate models suggest that this will continue into the future. The preliminary results from this project will be of interest to all of us living, working and playing in the Mississippi Valley watershed and surrounding areas. We hope to interest other naturalists to develop similar outreach initiatives to monitor similar aspects of the environment.
<b>Speaker</b>	
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>BIRDING AT POINT PELEE NATIONAL PARK</b>
<b>10 May</b>	<b>Meet:</b> Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.
<b>6:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Leaders:</b> Ken Allison & Roy John
<b>to</b>	
<b>Sunday</b>	
<b>13 May</b>	
<b>6:00p.m.</b>	Two of our excellent, experienced birders will be our guides for our Club's bi-annual trip to Pointe Pelee and Rondeau Parks. Point Pelee National Park is a fascinating blend of marsh, beach, fields and mature Carolinian forest located at the southernmost tip of mainland Canada. Its strategic position along the migratory corridors has led to its international reputation as perhaps the best spot in North America to view the northern migration of birds. Hordes of naturalists arrive each spring to observe many of the more than 300 bird species that have been recorded in the park. Join your fellow Club members in this naturalist's paradise. The bus (washroom equipped) will leave Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre at <b>6:00 a.m.</b> Thursday May 10, arriving at the Comfort Inn, Leamington about 4:00 p.m. We will return to Ottawa on Sunday May 13, expecting to arrive about 6:00 p.m. Bus and accommodation for three nights is \$420 (shared room) and \$820 (single). There is room for just a few more participants. Call the Club number at 613-722-3050 to reserve your place.

**Saturday**  
**12 May**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**to**  
**12 noon**

### **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY**

**Location:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Interpretation, east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the traffic circle. Map at <http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php>.

**Leader:** Christine Hanrahan

Spring migration is underway and how better to celebrate than with guided tours around the garden. Join us to celebrate the return of migratory birds with tours, displays, and handouts about various aspects of bird conservation.

Free refreshments. For more information contact Christine at [vanessa@magma.ca](mailto:vanessa@magma.ca).

**Tuesday**  
**15 May**  
**6:30 p.m.**

### **EVENING WALK IN MONAGHAN WOODS**

**Leader:** Connie Clark

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza at 6:30 p.m. or about 6:45 p.m. at the Monaghan Forest parking lot off Fallowfield Rd. between Moodie Drive and Richmond Rd.

This is normally, a real hot spot for wild flowers, insects and birds. Paths can be muddy in spring. Be prepared with waterproof foot wear, binoculars, insect repellent and a hat. (See the recent article on Monaghan Forest in *T&L* Oct. - Dec. 2005 for more information.)

**Wednesday**  
**16 May**  
**7:00 a.m.**

### **BIRDING IN BRITANNIA WOODS**

**Leader:** John Cartwright

**Meet:** Cassels Road, Britannia Conservation Area, near the entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant. (If you need a ride, call John at 613-789-6714 to arrange for a pick-up.) This is one of Ottawa's premier birding places because of the rich woods, Mud Lake and proximity to the Ottawa River. We shall be looking for migrating spring warblers and water birds on this morning bird walk.

**Saturday  
26 May  
9:30 a.m.**

### **EXPLORING McCARTHY WOODS**

**Leader:** Gordon Belyea

**Meet:** Hunt Club/Riverside Community Centre, 3320 Paul Anka Drive at McCarthy Rd. (Bus # 87 gets you there.) These lovely old woods, right in the city of Ottawa, have a remarkable beech-maple stand featuring trees more than 100 years old. Other interesting features are Blue Beech, Hawthorns and an understory of shrubs and a rich carpet of flowers. These woods attract a good number of birds and are home to small mammals. Come explore these woods with Gordon as your guide. Hats, insect repellent, hand lenses or magnifying glasses, binoculars, field guides and a drink would be helpful on this long morning walk.

**Saturday  
26 May  
and  
Sunday  
27 May**

### **BIO-BLITZ AT MACOUN MARSH**

Club members with an expertise in various taxonomic groups are invited to participate in this BioBlitz organized by the Canadian Biodiversity Institute and Michael Leveille, teacher at the Educarium. See the article elsewhere in this issue of *T&L*. If interested, please contact Heather Hamilton at 613-826-2190.

**Saturday  
2 June  
9:30 a.m.  
to  
12:30 p.m.**

### **ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE**

**Location:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Parking lot, east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the traffic circle. Map at <http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php>.

This annual fund raiser is a good opportunity to learn more about native plant gardening, ask questions, get advice and buy plants not often found in local nurseries. Donations of native plants and seeds are always welcome (species native to eastern Ontario only). Please bring them to the FWG any Friday morning or call us at 613-234-6767 or 613-730-0714; we'd be happy to pick them up from you.

**Sunday**  
**3 June**  
**9:00 a.m.**  
**to**  
**3:00 p.m.**

## **WILDFLOWER OUTING TO THE GATINEAU HILLS**

**Leader:** Carolyn Callaghan (819-456-3904)

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza, (coordinator Phil Jeffreys 613-721-0139) (or follow the directions below for meeting at the farm at 10:00 a.m.)

Join Carolyn on a trip to her farm in the Gatineau Hills. The farm has a variety of habitats, including hardwood forest, mixed wood forest, riparian, pastures, and fields. The focus of the trip will be wildflowers. Bring a lunch and drink.

[Directions: Take Hwy 5 North to Tulip Valley (Hwy 5 ends here, so exit off Hwy 5 to the right and proceed to the traffic lights). Turn left on 105 at the Tulip Valley traffic lights. Continue on 105 past the entrance to Wakefield. Exit left onto Hwy 366. Continue along 366 for approximately 15 km (you will pass the town of Masham). Turn right at the flashing lights onto Chemin Cleo Fornier. Travel 3 km to Chemin Monte Belisle and turn left onto it (the road Rene Levesque is located on the right heading east). Travel for 1 km and turn left at #45 (white farm house at the base of a hill). There is a large white pine tree in front of the house].

**Saturday**  
**9 June**  
**7:30 a.m.**

## **BIRDING AND NATURALIZING IN THE CHAFFEY'S LOCKS AREA**

**Leader:** Jeff Skevington. (613-832-1970)

**Meet** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.

Chaffey's Locks is about 1.5 hours south of Ottawa. This area has one of the highest diversities of breeding birds in Ontario, with a remarkable array of southern species. We will try to find species such as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo, Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Red-shouldered Hawk. If we are very lucky, we may see Black Rat Snake or some of the amazing insects that are normally found only on the north shores of Lake Erie. We are also very fortunate that we will have access to the Queen's University Biological Station. Our group will end at the station where the staff will provide us with dinner (cost is \$12.50 per person for a 3-course meal (salads, hamburgers, desserts, coffee/tea) and will give us a chance to interact with some of the researchers there. Because we have to order meals in advance, this outing requires sign-up at the Club number (722-3050) by May 25. Please bring a field lunch as we will not be near any stores during the day.

	<b>OFNC MONTHLY MEETING</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>THE HELLULAND ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT</b>
<b>12 June</b>	<b>Speaker:</b> Dr. Patricia Sutherland
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Location:</b> Canadian Museum of Nature (VMMB), Metcalfe and McLeod Streets, The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor.
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	The Helluland Archaeology Project was established at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in order to explore Dr. Sutherland's recent discovery of a previously unsuspected European presence in Arctic Canada during the centuries around AD 1000. The project takes its title from the name given by the Norse to the most northerly of three lands to the west of Greenland; the name likely refers to Baffin Island and the adjacent regions of the eastern Canadian Arctic. Dr. Sutherland will describe the results of recent archaeological excavation and various types of laboratory analysis, undertaken in order to investigate the question of contact between these early Europeans and Aboriginal occupants of the eastern Arctic. Of particular interest in understanding the nature of the European presence are the implications of spinning technology applied to the fur of local animals, and of the presence of rats in association with architectural remains quite different from those of structures used by Aboriginal arctic peoples.
<b>Speaker</b>	

<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>EARLY EVENING WALK AT THE FLETCHER</b>
<b>13 June</b>	<b>Leader:</b> Sandra Garland
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Meet:</b> Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the traffic circle. Map at: <a href="http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php">http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php</a>
<b>to</b>	
<b>9:00 p.m.</b>	This is a lovely time of day to spot interesting wildlife. This walk will feature the pond and the bird, amphibian and insect activity associated with it.

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**Thursday**  
**21 June**  
**10:00 a.m.**

### **EXPLORING THE FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN**

**Leader:** Christine Hanrahan

**Meet:** FWG Interpretation Centre, east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the traffic circle. Map at:  
<http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php>.

This walk will last about 2 hours. Bring binoculars, cameras, field guides if you have them. This will be a general nature walk to show participants the diversity to be found in this small urban wild space. This walk is limited to 12 people. Please register with the Club number 613-722-3050.

**Sunday**  
**24 June**  
**9:00 a.m.**

### **PURDON FEN**

**Leader:** Robina Bennet

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.

The Purdon Fen in Lanark County (about 1 hour drive) is home to probably the largest colony of Showy Lady's-slipper Orchids in Canada. In addition to these beautiful orchids, participants will have an opportunity to see Leafy White Dog Orchis, Pitcher Plant and other interesting wild flowers. Bring a lunch. A short hike in a forest close by is planned.

**Saturday**  
**30 June**  
**9:00 a.m.**

### **DAMSELS & DRAGONS AT CEDAR GROVE NATURE TRAIL**

**Leaders:** Bob Bracken and Chris Lewis (613 722-5929)

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza.

We shall drive to Cedar Grove Nature Trail, Roger Stevens Rd., (south side), east of Dwyer Hill Rd., a 30 minute drive. Our first visit to Roger's Pond for odonates was in June 2005, and we were very impressed. We found 22 species in one morning, including many that are locally uncommon such as the Aurora Damsel, Horned Clubtail, Brush-tipped Emerald, and Williamson's Emerald. This location was also productive for many species of butterflies including Arctic Skipper, Silvery Checkerspot and Tawny Crescent, as well as several Mink Frogs. We invite you to join us on our return visit to this intriguing site, full of potential for many discoveries! For this half-day outing, bring a snack and beverage, as well as an insect net and hand-lens if you have them. Field guides will available to assist with odonate identification, but we will be exploring many aspects of natural history, so please bring your own books if you are interested in other fauna & flora of the Ottawa area. As always, young people are welcome and encouraged to participate. If the weather is inclement (i.e. rain) the trip is cancelled.

**Saturday**  
**7 July**  
**8:00 a.m.**

**Rain date:**  
**Sunday**  
**8 July.**

### **FIRST ANNUAL OTTAWA BUTTERFLY COUNT**

Leaders: Jeff Skevington & Peter Hall

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, NE corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza, or call Jeff Skevington (613-832-1970) for a meeting site west of town.

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) has coordinated butterfly counts following the same format as the Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). These counts are published as part of an ongoing census program (for more information see <http://www.naba.org/counts.html>). Volunteer participants' focus is on a 24 km diameter circle and conduct a one-day census within that circle. As with CBCs, \$4.00 is charged to participants to support the publication of the results (not obligatory, but encouraged; children under 12 are free). This is the first year that OFNC will sponsor a count. The count area will be centred at Marion Corners (SW of Ottawa), resurrecting a former non-OFNC count circle. It includes several important butterfly areas such as the Long Swamp and the Burnt Lands alvar. It is an all day event so bring your lunch. No experience is necessary! We will put teams together on site and match up people so that everyone has a chance to learn from the experts. If you have binoculars and a butterfly net, bring them along. Butterflies may be captured and brought to the count compilation alive for identification and release. We plan to meet after the count for a compilation/discussion of results and a small meal. Location not yet decided. We will have a collection of butterflies along to help people figure out what they saw and to learn a bit more about these amazing creatures. We hope that everyone can make it to the compilation, as it should be a lot of fun; however, if you can't, we will get your data in the afternoon before you leave. **Call Jeff between 6 and 9 p.m. on Friday night at 613-832-1970 if in doubt about the weather or for any other questions.**

**DEADLINE:** Material intended for the July - September issue must be in the editor's hands by May, 2007. Mail your manuscripts to:

Karen McLachlan Hamilton, 2980 Moodie Drive, Nepean, ON, K2J 4S7  
H: (613) 838-4943; email: [hamilton@storm.ca](mailto:hamilton@storm.ca).

### **ANY ARTICLES FOR TRAIL & LANDSCAPE?**

Have you been on an interesting field trip or made some unusual observations? Write up your thoughts and send them to Trail & Landscape. We accept email, diskettes and CDs, or submissions in traditional form-typed, written, or printed.

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WEBMASTER's email  
[webmaster@ofnc.ca](mailto:webmaster@ofnc.ca)

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